

sail among liars

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/33645874) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/33645874>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Dream SMP
Relationships:	Eret & Foolish_Gamers , Noah Brown & Cara Captain Puffy
Characters:	Cara CaptainPuffy , Foolish_Gamers , Eret (Video Blogging RPF)
Additional Tags:	Pirates , Revenge , Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence , Sailing , Grief/Mourning , Regret , Hijinks & Shenanigans , Deity Foolish_Gamers , Deity Eret (Video Blogging RPF) , Parental Cara CaptainPuffy , Protective Cara CaptainPuffy , Unconventional Families , Cara CaptainPuffy-centric , Secrets , Cara CaptainPuffy Needs a Hug , Multiple Pronouns for Eret (Video Blogging RPF)
Language:	English
Series:	Part 3 of how did we get here?
Stats:	Published: 2021-09-02 Updated: 2022-02-23 Words: 13,568 Chapters: 3/4

sail among liars

by [orphan_account](#)

Summary

"She hadn't slept well since she'd handed off the book. "

Puffy can't get her meeting with Phil and Tommy off her mind. It reminds her too much of what she's lost. So she sets off alone, but soon her quest for vengeance. She isn't alone for long.

Notes

This fic will have 3 parts. Chapter 1 takes place following the events of Chapter 29 of If History is Dead and Gone, and the events of In the age of icons. You have to read Chapter 29 to understand it and the other is recommended.

CW: mentioned/implied child death

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Chapter 1

She hadn't slept well since she'd handed off the book.

It was the right thing to do. Puffy was almost certain of that. Despite the honestly terrifying rumors that followed the so-called Angel of Death, including his absolute disregard for human life, Puffy had only seen a man.

Not just a man, but a father. A desperate, desperate father who was willing to do anything for his son, even if it meant tearing her ship apart for it. Puffy didn't appreciate the threat against her crew, of course, but she could understand the sentiment. She could respect it. She could respect that he'd come to her, wings tuck away, as the father of a hurting child with no other options first, rather than with swords and blades and a thirst for blood.

That and Tommy. Tommy who had apparently known her. She'd wracked her brain for a memory of a little kid whose life she'd saved but come up blank, though that certainly didn't mean it hadn't happened. She wished she could remember him because he seemed... he seemed excited to see her. For a moment the dark clouds on his face had parted and he'd looked like he was fourteen for a moment, instead of someone much older.

He'd been scared and angry and Puffy's heart had broken because there was so obviously some disconnect. She didn't remember him, but she had to offer him a place. Of course, he hadn't taken it.

Tommy had seemed certain that staying with Phil was the only way to fix his problem and Phil had seemed willing to go to any ends to solve it, so-

That's why she handed the book over.

That didn't mean some part of her didn't selfishly regret it, in some way. Tommy belonged with his father, but Puffy had always had a bit of a savior complex. Sue her.

"Are you still thinking about him, Captain?"

Puffy startled slightly, turning to face her first mate. She was loyal, unyielding, and her best confidant. She knew Puffy far too well for Puffy's taste sometimes.

"Which him?" Puffy asked, in lieu of a direct answer.

"The fucking blonde kid," she said, coming up to lean against the rail beside her. They were on open ocean, with no land on either side, the smaller ships flanking them. A few crew members, milled about as they prepared to switch out with the day crew. None of them were close enough to bother her though. While she always tried to be available for all of her crew, they knew that when she wandered the ship in the early morning hours before the sun quite broke the horizon, it was best if they didn't bother her.

Of course, Minx was never very good at those types of things. Her first mate could always be trusted to say what she thought. Puffy didn't mind though. "Tommy." Puffy agreed. "I suppose. I'm thinking of him. Of Phil. And of--"

Some days Puffy still couldn't quite find it in herself to say his name. She hated it, sometimes, the way it stuck in her throat like hot tar and that it just simply wouldn't come out. Minx knew, however, and simply gave her a sympathetic smile.

"You always think about him, Captain. I assumed that was a given, idiot." She wasn't quite gentle, but it was as close as Minx ever got. Puffy couldn't help but snort, though it wasn't particularly funny.

"You're right," Puffy said, "But seeing Tommy...seeing Phil... it made me feel guilty."

"How so? Because you let that Tommy kid go?"

"No. Yes. I don't know." Puffy said with a sigh. "I... I think that Philza, a dangerous bastard he may be, is protecting his son. He didn't even seem that dangerous... just worried. Tommy was also... he wasn't doing well. I wish I could have helped him more than I did. Both of them. And...."

Minx had not met them. She'd been on the *Brig o' Bane*, the contingency should something have gone wrong with her and their second mate.

"And what?" Minx pressed, staring at her

"It made me feel like a shit parent," Puffy admitted quietly. "Philza... Phil was willing to tear me apart for Tommy. I think he has. But me- Fuck- I didn't, I haven't done anything. As a parent, I failed. I failed horribly and then just-." her voice broke and she snapped her jaw shut. Crying was fine, but it wasn't something she made a habit of doing where people could see her.

"Puffy." the first mate said and there was something almost like pity in her voice/ Minx didn't do pity often. Or ever. Puffy didn't *deserve* pity. Very, very few people knew about her son. Even fewer knew what happened to him. Not a single other living soul knew the entire story or even his name. Puffy could not bring herself to tell anyone. It was one of her deepest shames, that she couldn't even bring herself to celebrate his life because of the guilt that closed around her throat like a fucking chokehold.

"You did everything you could have then." She said "You can't blame yourself-"

"I can." She snapped back, before taking a breath to calm herself. "And even if I couldn't then, Minx, those bastards that did that, they've walked free. I let them walk free. What kind of parent allows that? Phil was willing to tear me apart for a bok that might help his son. My son was murdered and I let his killers walk free for years."

"Puffy, perhaps you shouldn't be using the fucking angel of death as a parenting metric." Minx said with a frown "I don't know that he'd be a good parent, considering that even in retirement he runs the same circles as Technoblade, or so the rumors say. A "

“You didn’t see him.” Puffy said, shaking her head “You don’t get it. How can a man who is considered a bloodthirsty killer be a better parent than me? I’ve tried to move on and I can’t. I’ve tried to live my life but the guilt... it eats at me every fucking day and seeing Phil and Tommy... it was like a slap to the face. It was a wake-up call.”

“What are you saying, Captain?” She asked sharply, and Puffy could feel Minx studying her with narrow eyes.

“I’m saying that I’ve let the bastards that murdered my son and my crew get off scot-free for too long. I’ve been complacent and scared to face my own failures. Not anymore. I can’t move on, knowing that they are all out there. That they’re living without fear.” Puffy said vehemently. “I have to finish this”

“Puffy, you’ve worked hard for over a decade years to get here.” Minx tried and Puffy knew that she meant only the best. That didn’t mean she was going to listen. “You’re the captain of one of the most successful pirate fleets not only on the server but on any server-”

“That’s the reason.” Puffy said “I was powerless then and my entire crew paid the price. I’m different now. The crew... they don’t really need me. Half of them aren’t even sure if I’m the Captain or not. This is wonderful, but... I need this. If I can’t have this, if I can’t move on somehow... then all of this has been for nothing.”

“Doing this won’t bring your son back.” Minx warned “You know that I have no room to speak on vengeance- I certainly got mine and for that, I’ll always be.. Well, I don’t know if grateful is the right word, but I don’t entirely regret it. It won’t be what you hope it is, though, Puffy. You can’t destroy yourself for this.”

“I can’t stay,” Puffy said. She had considered this for years but had always come up with excuses not to. Perhaps though, she’d been running from confronting it. Grief was easiest to deal with when she simply wasn’t. Something about the incident only a few days ago had taken a sword and ripped her old wounds right open, her heart bleeding again with the grief that she thought that she’d long stuffed down.

“This is the only way I won’t be destroyed.”

“You’re being fucking dramatic,” Minx said. Silence fell between them “When are you leaving?”

“Soon as I can clear off a ship.”m Puffy said. She’d already decided she was taking the *Dolphin Strider* . It was her favorite ship. That hadn’t been a lie to Tommy. “I’ll go it alone, once we get everyone’s stuff moved off. The ship is small and I should be able to man it myself. I have before.”

It was Puffy’s first pirate ship of her own, and she’d started sailing alone nearly eight years ago after spending a couple of years on a different crew. It wasn’t easy, but it could certainly be done.

“No way in hell,” Minx said, rounding on her with something like fury in her eyes. Puffy didn’t flinch against it “You aren’t going alone.”

“I can’t ask any of the crew to come with me.” Puffy argued, “They signed up to be pirates, not part of my revenge quest.”

“If you think they’ll let you go alone, you’re an ender damned fool, Captain.” Minx spat “If you think I’ll let you go alone, you ass, then-”

“You can’t come.” Puffy said resolutely “Absolutely not. You have to stay. You’re the only person I trust to keep this place running. You’ll keep them in line and afloat.”

Her shoulders slumped in something like defeat for a split second, before Minx’s jaw set firmly. Minx wouldn’t let her down. Never had before. “There’s not a thing I can say to change your mind, is there, Captain”

Puffy shook her head, as she looked out at the sun that was just beginning to rise over the horizon. “Not this time.”

“Then let’s get started, bitch,”

It only took a day, really, for Puffy to get things set up. Minx was right. Despite Puffy’s announcement that she’d be taking the *Dolphin Strider* alone, nearly a quarter of the entire crew tried to volunteer to go with her, even though she hadn’t told them what she’d be doing.

She ended up with none of them.

“This is my mission.” she explained, to an outraged and seemingly heartbroken crew “This is... I can’t ask any of you to come with me. I won’t.”

Despite protests, of the youngest ones who clung to her arm and begged her to stay and the oldest, who simply hugged her, or pressed supplies into her hand without a word, Puffy could not be budged.

Not even as it broke her heart. She’d keep smiling, keep going, and she certainly wouldn’t waiver, but this was her home. Her crew. She needed to leave, but it felt like her heart was being torn in two.

To rectify that, she did as she had always done- throw herself into a new project. This time it was preparing to leave.

It was a whirlwind of preparation, separating things. Packing supplies on and off the *Dolphin Strider*, and finishing up all the necessary things that would leave Minx as captain in her place. One of those things was cleaning out her office.

She’d set up that room nearly five years ago, when she’d come into the possession of *Fool’s Luck* via a...well, it wasn’t legal means but no one had died in its acquisition.. Over time it had become her home. All the ships were her home, but the four walls of her office, they were her retreat, away from everyone. Even when they were acting, that was *Puffy’s* room. It was her element, where she’d planned raids and battles and adventures with her first and second mates. It was strange to see her things gone. They’d only been moved and

theoretically, it was temporary, but something felt oddly final about the way that it was packed up.

She... wasn't as sad as she quite thought she would be, at the idea of never coming back, at least not the same as she'd left. From above the deck, she could already hear her first mate- the new captain, calling orders and trying to regain control of the chaos that had risen in wake of Puffy's announcement. Puffy couldn't help but smile.

Minx would be a wonderful captain.

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Puffy loved her fleet. Her crew with all its moving parts and responsibilities was something she prided herself on. She had become a pirate with her own hard work and the work of a dedicated and wonderful crew.

But, there was something about the weight of that specific responsibility being gone. It had been years since Puffy had really been able to sail like this. Normally her days were full of strategy, and plans, and helping delegate and resolve issues. A crew of nearly seventy-five meant that drama was constant.

She hadn't realized the weight on her shoulders until it was gone. While Puffy had always made a point to do as much of the manual labor as she could (a good captain was always willing to do the dirtiest jobs of the crew) but... she'd missed it, the freedom that came from having such a small crew, and such a loose schedule.

That, *that's* why she'd become a pirate. The freedom of the open ocean and the wind in her sails.

It was hard work, sailing on her own. The ship was... it was perhaps harder than she remembered to man it alone and caught herself half-ready to call out to a crew she'd left behind. It was the right thing to do. The path she was on, wasn't one she was willing to drag anyone else down with her.

And maybe it was the shame. She'd rather pull every rope herself than tell her crew what happened. She missed Minx's steady sharpness but loyalty and the calming presence of her second and third mate who balanced them all.

But she'd rather miss them than have any of them know the extent of her failures. Even Minx, who would not turn her back on Puffy... Puffy was still her captain. She could not bring herself to quite tell her everything.

That didn't make it easy.

It was a long journey, to her starting point of her searching- the largest city in the sever, the West Shore Port- and it was many days of boring open seas that left her a little too alone with her own thoughts, for her taste. The burning anger only lasted so long, and Puffy had never been very good at being fuelled by fire. The water called to her far more.

It was smooth sailing, at least, though Puffy couldn't help but want a little excitement. She was a pirate- her life was not meant to be boring. It had been nearly a week now, and she was both bored and desperately lonely. She hadn't ever handled lonely well either.

"I'd even take a small storm," Puffy grumbled up into the hot sun, as she pulled on the ropes. "Or a stowaway."

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Puffy wanted to put on the record though, that despite the seriousness of her mission and the pain in her chest, she could appreciate that the universe had a sense of humor.

It was late night- She'd grabbed her late afternoon nap on the deck and had just woken up. Her back arched slightly from the awkward position and her hair stuck, a little grossly, to her head with sweat.

The sun was low on the horizon and the water was still calm. She was making good time and... there was little to do. There was always something to do on a ship, but no details need to be adjusted, the course was steady, and-

Puffy froze. Her hybrid traits were admittedly minimal, compared to others. Her horns were large, her hair was curly and thick, and her ears, while mostly human-looking, were far more sensitive than a human's.

And she could hear... something. It wasn't the normal sounds of the day- she knew those well since she'd spent most of her life around them. No, it sounded like.... A person?

Puffy scrambled to the bow of the ship, squinting into the fading daylight and-

There.

A little under league or so away was what appeared to be a small dinghy, bobbing against the waves, backlit by the setting sun. At least one person was on the small boat, best she could tell and they were... Puffy wasn't sure if they were calling for help, or just speaking to a companion she couldn't see.

She had no idea who it was, or why they were out there- for all she knew they could be murderers or thieves, though perhaps that might be a little hypocritical of her considering her career choices. But, it could be someone who just had shitty, shitty, luck.

Puffy wasn't willing to risk anyone innocent dying of something like starvation floating on a dinghy in the middle of the ocean if she could help it.

It wasn't exactly easy to turn her ship on a dime, especially not alone, but it was doable. "Hello!" she called, as she sailed closer, gripping the wheel of the ship. Once, closer, it was easy to see that there were, in fact, two people in the boat. The one she'd heard was sitting upright and now that he was closer it appeared he was...humming quietly under his breath- not quite singing but... Puffy didn't know what he was doing.

More concerning, however, was their companion, who was laying down in the bottom of the tiny boat, seemingly unconscious. “Hey!” Puffy called, this time succeeding in getting their attention. “Do you need help?”

They startled, and Puffy was caught off guard by the shade of their eyes- a startling green. A hybrid of sorts then. They cracked a dazzling smile, that seemed a bit out of place for their situation.

“Hello! “They called, surprisingly bright, considering they were in a tiny boat, with no apparent supplies, hundreds of miles from the nearest shore. “Yes! We’re in, well, a bit of a pickle!”

Puffy figured as much. It was a risk, of course, bringing them on board, but it seemed that the two of them were well and truly stranded and Puffy... she couldn’t stomach the idea of leaving them out to die. “Let me, anchor, then I’ll bring the two of you up!” Puffy called.

A few minutes, and only one near miss with the open water later, Puffy had hauled the two onto her boat, using her entire body weight to help them over the edge. The conscious one, she learned, was Foolish. He was stronger than he looked and had climbed up the rope ladder with only one free arm, carrying his companion, Eret, over his shoulder.

“They... uh, don’t do so well in the heat.” Foolish informed Puffy, though he didn’t sound particularly sure about it “She got a little too carried away earlier and then passed out, like a dingus. He’s still breathing, so he’ll be fine but, I’m glad that I can get him in some, uh, shade.”

“Do they need a healing pot?” Puffy asked, mentally going over how many she has with her. She packed several, but boats aren’t the best place for brewing stands, especially not when she’s the only one on the boat. But Eret had looked unwell and was entirely unresponsive as she laid over Foolish’s shoulder. It was concerning.

“Nah,” Foolish said, apparently far less concerned than Puffy. He hesitated “He doesn’t really care for the effects of healing potions- sometimes he has weird reactions. She’ll be fine- just need to sleep it off.”

Puffy wasn’t convinced that Eret was fine, but, Foolish seemed unconcerned. “Speaking of, I don’t mean to impose, but is there somewhere I can put them down? He’s probably not very comfortable like this.”

“Sure,” Puffy found herself saying because she had invited them onto her ship.

“Well, I’m glad I came across you two,” Puffy said, as she lead him to the underbelly of the ship, where the quarters were. They weren’t nearly as expensive as the ones on the *Fool’s Luck* or even the *Brig o’ Bane*, but there was a room lined with cots and hammocks the crew had left behind, and then her quarters, which were smaller, but secluded. “That boat looked like it was hardly holding together.”

“It wasn’t exactly the best.” Foolish admitted, as they left the room where he’d laid Eret down. Puffy privately thought they were dressed a bit oddly for sailing, but hey, who was she to judge. “But it was... we were making it work. I’m sure it would’ve been fine, but I am glad we’re hitching a ride with you, uh...oh! How rude of me! I never asked your name!” He slapped his forehead a little comically, eyes blowing wide with what appeared to be at least somewhat genuine dismay at his own actions.

Puffy chuckled “To be fair, you were a bit worried about trying to get your friend to safety. But I’m Captain Puffy.” She offered her hand to him, which he shook with an unexpected amount of enthusiasm.

“Pleasure to meet you, Captain,” Foolish said as he released her hand, then gave a small bow.

“I’m a Captain, not a king.” Puffy said with a laugh “No need to bow. You can also just call me Puffy.”

“I dunno, that seems a bit disrespectful,” Foolish said lightly, though it was easy to see he was teasing. “I don’t want to have to walk the plank so soon after getting on board.”

“Luckily for you, I’m fresh out of walking planks.” Puffy joked. She sobered slightly as they reentered the deck “Now, I know that Eret was worse off than you, but are you hurt? That boat didn’t seem to have too many supplies.”

“Pft, I’m fine.” Foolish said dismissively “I don’t- uh, my inventory was stack, you know? Besides we didn’t get far from shore.”

Puffy frowned “You’re at least two days away from the nearest shore.”

“Really?” Foolish said, and he sounded genuinely surprised “Huh. Tie flies I guess! Eret is far better at keeping up with time than I am, old pal is always reminding me to eat.”

That was... odd. And concerning.

“You should be glad that I found you, especially since Eret seemed unwell.” Puffy said gently “It could have been very dangerous for both of you.”

Foolish’s face clouded for a moment before he broke out into a grin again as if the concern hadn’t been there at all. “I suppose that’s true! I owe you a great debt, oh Captain.” Foolish said “And thank you. Truly. Is there a way I can repay you?”

Despite knowing nothing about Foolish, he set her at ease. Perhaps it should be concerning, but Puffy had always considered herself an excellent judge of character. Going with her gut had saved her more times than she could count and she wasn’t about to go back on it now.

She grinned. “What do you know about sailing?”

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Papa Puffy Papa Puffy Papa Puf-

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Foolish was a decent enough crew member.

He wasn't perfect by any stretch. It was obvious he had some experience with sailing. It was *also* pretty obvious it had been a while since he'd been on a ship.

Foolish knew the basics, it seemed, but sometimes it was like he forgot how to do them, standing there blankly, frowning at ropes or sails, like he'd never seen them before. Sometimes Puffy gave him directions and while he always did his best to follow the directions, he occasionally took things too literally and though he'd only been on her ship about two days he'd already ended up terribly tangled in ropes.

"How the hell did you manage this?" Puffy asked, mostly confused, but a little amused at the sheepish expression on Foolish's face.

"I...I don't quite know." Foolish admitted, face darkening slightly "But it seems I have gotten myself in a bit of a pickle."

"A bit of a pickle" meant that he was dangling sideways from the ropes that were meant to be holding the boons in place, suspended about three feet off the ground. "What were you even trying to do?" Puffy asked as she began tugging gently at the ropes around him. Shit, he was in there *tight*. It had to hurt and he'd probably have rope burns. Puffy could relate to the pain of that. She had her own scarred hands to prove that point. She'd give him healing pot whether he liked it or not.

"I was trying to tie things down like you asked!" Foolish said "And then there were lots of ropes and I was trying to hold them, and the boom started swinging and, well-" he attempted to gesture toward himself but it looked more like a full-body wiggle "This happened. Somehow."

"Ender." Puffy said, briefly looking up "I can't figure out how you managed this. You're lucky it didn't wrap around your throat."

"That's me, lucky lucky guy!" Foolish agreed with an easygoing grin "Besides, this isn't too bad. It's kinda nice, actually, like uh, oh what's it called? A Ragoon? No, that's not it...."

“A cocoon?” Puffy suggested, barely holding back laughter at Foolish’s deeply furrowed brows.

Foolish’s face lit up “Yeah! A cocoon! Like a caterpillar, getting ready to turn into a beautiful butterfly.”

Puffy couldn’t help but laugh, “Alright then, Butterfly boy, if it’s so comfortable I can just leave you then.”

Foolish gasped, emerald green eyes widening dramatically “You wouldn’t leave me here!”

“I don’t know...” Puffy teased, tapping her chin “I mean, if you’re a caterpillar then I need to leave you there until you turn into a butterfly. Who am I to interrupt natural processes?”

“No!” Foolish cried dramatically, “I’m not a caterpillar! I don’t need to metamorphosize! Captain, Puffy, please free me!”

Puffy pretended to think for a moment, before sighing dramatically “I guess I can help you Foolish.”

Foolish rewarded her with a blinding grin. He was always so damn chipper, and it seemed to be infectious. Puffy couldn’t find it in herself to be all that irritated about him tangling her ropes. “Thank you, you’re a lifesaver, Puffy.”

“Don’t thank me until you’re out of the ropes,” she joked. She’d get him out, obviously, but it was going to take more time than she really wanted it to, based on the sheer amount of rope he was tangled in.

“You’ll get me out. I have faith in my captain.” Foolish said faux solemnly.

It took nearly thirty minutes, and Puffy ended up having to cut about half the ropes to free Foolish. He apologized for it, and promised that he’d pay for her to get some new. It wasn’t a huge deal, since Puffy had a ton of ropes below deck, but she appreciated the sentiment.

“Sorry again about the whole rope thing,” Foolish said, following her down below the deck. The ship was big enough that it didn’t need constant steering and Puffy could step away when she needed to.

“Don’t worry about ti Foolish, and you don’t have to buy me new ropes,” Puffy assured him, as they headed into the supply room. She really did need the room tied down for the evening, and the sun was slipping toward the horizon. “But, if you insist on making it up to me, but, I dunno, carry the ropes for me up to the deck. I’ll show you how to tie them so you don’t end up tangled like a fly in a spider web.”

“Or a caterpillar in a cocoon.” Foolish added seriously, as he took the armful of ropes from Puffy

Puffy snorted “Yeah, or like a caterpillar.”

“I don’t actually like caterpillars all that much,” Foolish admitted like it was some great secret. “They have too many legs, you know? But Butterflies, oh, those guys are just rad. I once built a house that was specifically made for butterflies! It was butterfly-themed and everything-”

As they made their way back up to the deck he rambled on about the build. It was wildly impressive if what he was saying was true. Puffy glanced down the hall where Foolish’s friend was still lying unconscious. Puffy had yet to see them wake and it made her uneasy. She’d offered Foolish healing and regen potions several times, but Foolish had waved her off each time, insisting that Eret was fine. He just needed some sleep.

Foolish also claimed Eret had woken up a couple of times in the night and taken a bit of water and food, which, there was a little extra water gone than she anticipated, so that was probably true. It was concerning they hadn’t really woken up, however, and Puffy was slightly more concerned at how unconcerned Foolish was every time Puffy brought the subject up.

Foolish seemed like a nice guy and despite herself, Puffy found herself wanting to trust him. Trusting him already, maybe. But, it was just odd. She hoped it was nothing sinister. She glanced at Foolish, who was still chattering about butterflies and he gave her a grin.

Puffy wasn’t particularly religious, but if she was, she’d pray that Foolish was exactly what he seemed.

Dinner wasn’t a formal affair. Puffy wasn’t a particularly good cook but she could ensure that they didn’t get food poisoning or scurvy. She thought that it was pretty hard to mess up bread and steak, but the way Foolish was staging at it, she thought maybe she was wrong.

“Everything alright?” She asked, “I know I’m not the best cook, but if it’s too bad-”

“On, no!” Foolish exclaimed, practically stuffing the entire steak in his mouth “‘S delicious!” He proclaimed, as he desperately attempted to chew.

Puffy laughed, shaking her head at his attempts to chew the entire steak in one go. “You don’t have to lie to me if it’s bad, it won’t hurt my feelings. I got kicked out of the kitchen a long time ago. That’s definitely something I miss from my old ship, is someone cooking for me.”

“Your old ship?” Foolish questioned, and Puffy chose to ignore the pained face he made as he swallowed the steak.

Puffy smiled “Yeah, I was... well, I was the Captain of the Fool’s Luck fleet.” Puffy admitted “That wasn’t exactly public knowledge, that I was captain, but I was. Three ships and a wonderful crew, enough money that if I wanted I could probably settle down and never have to work a day in my life.”

“Wow,” Foolish said, unnaturally green eyes wide. Puffy was certain he had to be a hybrid of some sort, with eyes and skin like that “That sounds awesome.”

“It was pretty fucking cool,” Puffy admitted with a grin. She hadn’t often gotten to brag about her accomplishments and while that didn’t really bother her, it was nice to be recognized for the years of hard work she’d put. The years of hard work she’d walked away from because she was on a mission. A mission she’d been ignoring over the last couple of days. At the reminder, cool guilt wrapped around her throat and she swallowed a little harder than necessary.

“So why'd you leave?” Foolish asked. From most people, it’d come off as prying, or nosey, but Foolish’s face was just open. Honest. He seemed *genuinely* curious. Didn’t mean she was going to answer him. She wasn’t sure she *could* answer him.

Puffy shrugged and hoped that she was successfully feigning nonchalance. “Oh that’s a long story, and I’ve talked way too much about myself already. Tell me about you Foolish- I need to make sure you aren’t going to murder me in my sleep or something.”

Foolish looked affronted “Hey! I wouldn’t do that. If I was going to murder someone I’d do it the proper way, in the middle of the day!”

Puffy laughed, throwing her head back. Something about Foolish was disarming in a way she couldn’t quite pinpoint. “Good to know I don’t need to sleep with an eye open.”

“I’m always honest about my murder tactics.” Foolish agreed with a grin.

“Uh-huh,” Puffy said “No, but seriously. What kind of hybrid are you, if you don’t mind me asking?”

Foolish blinked at her for a moment, the picture of confusion. “Hybrid... oh!” His face lit up in understanding “Oh, uh, yeah. I’m a... I don’t know, actually? I mean I kinda always assumed I was human, but who can *really* say for sure.”

Puffy’s smile faded, Foolish was obviously uncomfortable, but Puffy couldn’t help but be concerned for him. “Foolish, I... I don’t think you’re human. Humans don’t have solid emerald eyes. Or almost golden skin.”

Foolish rubbed the back of his neck, looking a bit embarrassed “Well, I wasn’t sure. It’s not like my parents were around to tell me about it or anything.”

Puffy’s heart twisted. He didn’t have his parents? No one to teach him about being a hybrid? Puffy’s traits had manifested rather early for a hybrid- she wasn’t quite ten when her horns started growing in- but her parents had been there every step of the way to help her and her sister.

She couldn’t imagine not understanding who you were or where you came from. It happened more often than she cared to think about. It was one thing to be human and not know your past. It was another to be a hybrid and be missing a fundamental piece of yourself. “Your parents weren’t around?”

Foolish’s eye widened as if he just now realized what he’d admitted to. “Well, no, not really.” He said with a nervous laugh “I mean you know how it is, sometimes you’re just kinda are a

kid, then bam! You're an adult! Who needs parents, I mean c'mon. It's fine."

It really wasn't fine.

Minx always told her that she was too much of a softie and really, Puffy knew next to nothing about Foolish, but she couldn't help it.

"Foolish, I'm sorry," Puffy said softly. But, he was obviously uncomfortable with her soft tone and pity, so she switched tactics "But, hey, good news."

"What?" Foolish asked, more hesitant than he'd been the entire time she'd known him. She couldn't help her devious grin.

"You've got a parent now. I'm adopting you" Puffy proclaimed, grinning as she gestured to herself "Papa Puffy. Nice to meet you son."

Foolish looked taken aback for a moment, before laughing, which was the reaction she hoped for.

"Adopted?" He exclaimed "Wow! What a day!"

"Yep." Puffy said seriously "Adopted. You're my son now. No take-backs."

"Hah!" Foolish cried "No takebacks. You're stuck with my now Captain. You fell right into my devious plan."

"How do you know that wasn't *my* plan?" Puffy joked "I could be a serial adopter, you know/"

"Nah, it's because I'm special." Foolish disagreed.

"I guess you are," Puffy admitted with a laugh, but it was more genuine than she wanted to admit. Minx was right. She was too soft. Foolish didn't make it any easier.

Foolish leaned into the 'bit' over the next few just as much as Puffy did, which was to say, a lot.

It wasn't constant or anything. That would just be annoying and despite popular thought, Puffy did in fact have a ship to run and Foolish was supposed to be helping her do that. And helping Eret heal.

They did play into it. She would jokingly call him son, and he would return the sentiment. He didn't mean it of course. Uffy.. well, she was a softie, okay. And he never had any parents? Puffy couldn't help it. He wasn't a kid, but everyone deserved a good parent. Puffy wasn't exactly sure she could provide it though, since he probably didn't even want it. Foolish was an adult, traveling with his friend who was sick. He probably didn't want her trying to parent him or anything.

Speaking of Eret, Foolish had gone down to check on them and had been there a while.

Foolish talk about Eret pretty often, and almost always fondly. Puffy was pretty sure that Eret had to be fine, otherwise Foolish wouldn't be. He often referred to Eret as "old friend" like they were two eighty-year-olds, rather than younger than Puffy, who didn't consider herself particularly old. It was hilarious to her. But, it was comforting to know that Foolish did care about his friend. Or at least appeared to.

She wasn't entirely certain of the nature of their relationship. come to get Foolish for dinner and found him knelt beside Eret's bed, murmuring to them softly.

Eret still had her sunglasses on, even though Puffy thought it had to be terribly uncomfortable for long periods of sleep. But hey, she wasn't one to judge strange fashion choices.

"I'm sorry," Eret murmured, his voice hardly loud enough to hear. Puffy realized that she should walk away, but... she'd never seen Eret awake. She found herself entranced by the door despite her better judgment. "It's my fault we're in this mess. I put us in danger because-"

"No," Foolish said, with conviction "We're safe here. Puffy...Puffy's good. If you ever decide to stop being a sleepy head and meet her, I know they two of you will get along *swimmingly* "

Eret sighed and leaned heavily toward Foolish. They were sitting up slightly, as Foolish half-supported their weight. "Are you sure?"

"I'm offended you had to ask," Foolish said, placing his free hand over his heart. "Eret, I can't believe you think so little of me. Especially when you were the one who hasn't been making the good choices."

"You did tell me only to do it if I was sure" Eret agreed after a moment. "I wasn't sure and guess I overdid it."

Foolish laughed quietly "You're right, I did, you big dummy. And, like usual, you didn't listen to me."

"To be fair," They rasped, as Foolish allowed them to lay back down. Even from her spot shadowed in the doorway, though, Puffy could see an aching fond smile on Eret's face. "Normally you aren't the voice of reason between the two of us."

"I take offense to that." Foolish said with an audible gasp "I am perfectly reasonable. You're the unreasonable one, pal,"

"Mmhmm," Eret hummed and Puffy could tell that she was slipping back into sleep.

"Get some sleep, my friend," Foolish said quietly, gently brushing the hair back from their forehead. "You can rest easy and safe here."

Puffy stepped back as quietly as she could, creeping up the steps two at a time. Her face burned in shame at having eavesdropped on such a private conversation. She ended up on the

desk facing out over the ocean just in time for Foolish to emerge, grinning and happy as if he hadn't just had a serious conversation with his maybe dying friend. Or, at least his ill friend.

"Puffy!" Foolish exclaimed and she turned around, hoping that it wasn't obvious she'd just grossly violated his privacy. No matter that it was her ship, Puffy prided herself on respecting boundaries unless someone's life was in danger.

The argument that she thought Eret might be in danger sounded hollow even in her own mind.

"Foolish," She asked, instead of voicing any of that "Ready for dinner?"

"Oh, you know me," Foolish said "I'm always hungry! Love to eat, especially steak."

Puffy laughed, though she wasn't sure how much of what he was was sarcastic and how much is genuine. She was pretty sure he was being genuine- or at least trying to be. "Alright, come on." Puffy said, swallowing down her guilt "Let's eat. Then you're taking the first night shift."

"No," Foolish whined, "What sort of parent makes their kid stay up late? Aren't you supposed to set like, a bedtime?"

Puffy rolled her eyes "I adopted you, but you're still an adult. Nice try Foolish."

"It was worth a shot" Foolish said with a grin. Puffy rolled her eyes and didn't even bother to hide her fond smile.

--

"You know how the other day, you asked me why I left my ships and my crew and set off alone?" Puffy asked. She didn't look at Foolish, who was sitting just to her right but started up at the stars. It was an unusually clear night for this part of the sea- not a cloud in sight. She didn't know why she was telling him that.

Maybe it was because she was guilty about eavesdropping the day before, or maybe it was because she felt like she was betraying her son even try time ruffled Foolish's hair, or maybe it was because she trusted Foolish despite having known him for only a week, or maybe it was because she was a little bit drunk off the rum she's decided to take with her but Puffy found herself sitting on the deck under a clear night sky, telling Foolish the truth.

"What? Oh, yeah! I remember." Foolish said. His voice was surprisingly clear for how much he'd had to drink. Foolish was fun at a party, probably. She wasn't sure if this counted as a party, since there wasn't any music. "Don't have to tell me if you don't want to though. It's not my business I mean c'mon everyone is entitled to a few secrets."

"No, no." Puffy said "I need to tell you. I can't be- I can't expect you to trust me if I'm not honest with you. You deserve to know where we're going."

"If you want to tell me I am all ears," Foolish said. "Not literally of course- that'd be pretty weird. But I've been told I am a *very* good listener."

Puffy found herself laughing, despite the heavy band of guilt around her chest.

“Good, because I’ve got a kinda long story,” Puffy said. “So, I uh, the reason that I left my ships- my crew- well. I... Revenge.”

“Revenge” Foolish repeated, sounding... there wasn't judgment in his tone and Puffy was glad for that. She hadn't even realized that she was concerned about that, that Foolish would... she wasn't sure what she'd been concerned about. “What for?”

“My...” Puffy swallowed. She could count on one hand the number of people she'd ever admitted this to. “Years ago I had a small ship, I was barely sixteen, and so were most of my friends, all of us grown up in ports or on ships. I also, uh, had my son.”

“Your son?” Foolish repeated, eyes wide. “I didn't realize...”

“I guess he wasn't really my son biologically.” Puffy amended, at his expression “He was my nephew, my sister, and her husband's kid. They both died when he was a baby from illness. Couldn't afford healing potions, and by the time they realized how bad it was, it was too late. Both of them were prone to illness and were older than me. Took both of their third lives, and I was seventeen, left with a one-year-old. It wasn't easy at first, but I did my best. And things.. They were going pretty well. ”

“What happened?” Foolish prodded, uncharacteristically solemn

“We were attacked.” Puffy said “It was- we were taken for easy pickings by a pirate crew, we were just a small exploring vessel. Our spawns, stupidly, were set below deck. Half my crew was slaughtered, and the other half drowned three times below deck. I was thrown overboard and... I must've blacked out, but I was the only survivor when I woke up washed up on a strange beach. I spent over ten years trying to move on, but... I don't think I can until I get my hands on the bastards that sank my ship.”

“Oh, I'm-” Foolish seemed at a loss for words, probably because Puffy had just dumped something pretty heavy on him. “I'm sorry Puffy.”

“You didn't sink the ship,” Puffy said and bit back the instinct to say that he hadn't failed like she had. “And listen, Foolish, I don't expect you to help me. You can get off at the next port if you want to. I can be at one in a day or so if you-”

“What?” Foolish interrupted “Why would I want to get off?”

Puffy frowned “This isn't going to be easy, or fun Foolish. Or safe. You're what, twenty? I can't drag you into my mess.”

Foolish seemed capable, but he also seemed like he'd lived most of his life peacefully. He often talked about building or the pranks that he pulled. Puffy wasn't sure he could hurt a fly, and didn't want to risk him getting hurt. She'd always feared that. That's why she'd made the Angel of Death head straight for her. And Foolish... damn it. Minx said she got attached too fast. Minx was right but Puffy couldn't find it in herself to be too mad about it.

“I’ve been in plenty of messes. When Eret wakes up he can tell you that much. Besides, what kind of crewmate would I be if I just abandoned ship? What kind of son?” His eyes widened “Wait was that- was that, like, insensitive? Oh, I’m sorry, was I out of line? I didn’t mean to like-”

Puffy laughed despite herself. “Foolish, Foolish, I-it’s fine. I’m the one who adopted you, remember? And we agreed to no take-backs”

The panic in Foolish’s eyes receded and his shoulder dropped in relief. “Oh, good. I didn’t mean to crack a joke in a really serious moment, but you know how it is.”

“It’s fine. And... Foolish, I appreciate it. You really don’t have to stay.” Puffy said, “I don’t want to see you get hurt.”

“Psh,” Foolish said, as he got to his feet. “It’ll take more than a few measly little pirates to get to me. You worry too much.”

“That’s my job.” Puffy corrected. She didn’t want to go in yet. She’d probably have nightmares if she tried to go to sleep and the comfort of the stars was hard to leave. “Go get some rest Foolish, I’m not too drunk to watch the ship.”

“Aye aye Captain,” Foolish said with a lazy salute “See you in the morning.”

“See you then,” Puffy agreed, as she watched him vanish below deck, before turning back to the stars. She hoped that Foolish would never be in any danger because of her. She hoped that if he was, he’d been telling the truth about his abilities. Puffy wasn’t sure he was.

Chapter End Notes

1) This was originally going to be much, much longer but I decided to cut it here and actually, you know, update the fic. also, I promise this will tie in more later, we just need the puffy and foolish bonding, ok?

2) Puffy playlist? Ya’ll want one? Here you go!

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3prPkK9Efmlr1AKLTVdLDo?si=5299b909bf6f49bd>

3) hmm I can’t think of anything else, except that I love you guys, you rock, and that I hope you have a great day! Be kind, drink water, and love each other!

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Puffy might not be spiderman, but she's got a feeling something strange is happening

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“You know, I don’t think you ever answered me,”

Puffy looked over at Foolish, who was leaning back with his head resting against the mast while the sun rose in front of them, glittering on the open water. It was almost time for Puffy to catch a few hours of sleep, and Foolish had only just gotten up.

“About what?” Foolish asked, tilting his head. “I don’t think you’ve asked me any questions recently,”

“No, when I pulled you and Eret onto the ship-”

“Hey I hauled us both up, thanks,” foolish protested.

Puffy rolled her eyes “When I let you on my ship then, I asked you both what you were doing so far out at sea. you never really answered,”

“Oh!” Foolish exclaimed “Huh, well, I’m a builder. That’s kinda my thing. I love to build,”

And Puffy knew that. Foolish had other interests, but he spend hours talking about builds he’d supposedly done. Honestly, they all seemed like more than any sane person could do in their lifetime, let alone in twenty years, but he was passionate, and Puffy listened. Even if it wasn’t true, what was the harm? It was at least something interesting to talk about.

“But I also like to travel. Eret and I both can be adventurers, you know? Eret had a... trip, I guess, that they wanted to take. A *quest*, perhaps. I am always happy to go along for the ride. We just got a little mixed up on where we were, and then you found us!”

That certainly wasn't the full story “A quest? What are you, knights?”

Foolish laughed “Not hardly. Eret just- well, it’s a little hard to explain, but they’re looking for someone. It’s not really m story to tell, though. Eret’s kinda a private person,”

Puffy nodded “I get that. Is this person... family? Revenge?”

“Neither, really,” Foolish said with a shrug “But I just came along for the ride like I said. And it's a good thing that I did too because they are a total idiot sometimes. I don't know what she'd do without me. Probably die or something,”

“I'm deeply offended you think so little of my capabilities,”

Puffy prided herself on being quick on her feet, but she still nearly fell off the rail she was sitting on, at the sudden intrusion.

“Eret!” Foolish cried, scrambling to his feet with a brilliant grin. “You're awake,”

Eret, for their part, looked rather put together considering they'd spent days sick below deck. “Astute observation,” Eret said dryly, turning away from Foolish, to Puffy. “Nice to officially meet you, Captain. Sorry I've been a bit of a drag. I... overextended myself. I've woken a few times, but haven't quite had the energy to get up and about until today,”

“Call me Puffy,” Puffy said, sliding off the rail to offer them her hand “And I'm just glad to see you awake. I was getting worried,”

Eret “Puffy then. I hope Foolish didn't cause too much trouble while I was out of commission. I know how he can be,”

“Hey!” Foolish protested, gently nudging Eret's shoulder “I have been nothing but a model crew member, thank you very much. Puffy can attest to that. I'm probably the best one she's ever had,”

Foolish sent her a pleading look, but Puffy swallowed a smirk, tapping her chin thoughtfully “Hmm, I don't know Foolish. I mean, I've had a lot of crew members of the years that didn't get themselves tangled in ropes,”

Foolish's face flushed a darker gold color (and Puffy was more certain with every passing day that the poor guy was a clueless hybrid. SHE'd have to see if she could help figure it out) but he put his hand over his heart. “Betrayal!” he cried dramatically, “I can't believe you'd say that about your own son!”

“Son?” Eret exclaimed, eyebrows shooting up “I'm sorry?”

Puffy and Foolish shared a look, because, ah, oops. That probably was confusing “Oh,” Foolish said, recovering first. “Puffy adopted me,”

“He told me he didn't have parents to help him with his hybrid stuff” Puffy tacked on “So he's my son now,”

Eret's expression was somewhere between incredulous and confused. “Is that so?” they asked Foolish, pinning him with a look Puffy couldn't decipher.

Foolish, apparently could decipher it, and there were a few awkward moments where Eret and Foolish seemed to have a silent conversation before Foolish nodded vigorously “Yep! That's it. Puffy's my dad now,”

“Maybe I should’ve stayed asleep,” Eret said dryly, but Puffy was pretty sure they were joking.

Puffy was also pretty sure that the two of them needed to have a conversation that she wasn't exactly included in, so she made a show of stretching, and yawning far more loudly than normal. Foolish gave her a weird look, but she ignored it. “Well, look at the time, the sun's getting high, and I need to grab a couple of hours of sleep. Come get me if there’s an emergency,”

“Aye, aye captain,” Foolish said cheerfully, giving her an overzealous salute. Puffy rolled her eyes fondly.

“Pleasure to meet you, Puffy,” Eret said politely, though their tone was neutral at best.

“You as well Eret,” Puffy said “Foolish speaks of you fondly. I hate to be a rude host, but if I don’t get at least a couple hours of shut-eye, you wouldn’t want to be around me,”

“She gets delirious” Foolish stage whispered and Puffy flipped him off behind her back.

“Feel free to push him overboard if he gets annoying,” Puffy called over her shoulder.

“Don’t worry, I can handle this idiot,” Eret assured her.

The sound of good-natured bickering followed her all the way to bed and left something warm in her heart seeing Foolish so happy.

—

Puffy didn’t consider herself very religious or superstitious, but she was pretty sure she’d jinxed herself.

To be fair, her plan for her mission had been...shaky at best, she was willing to admit. “Find the Drowned crew and give retribution.” wasn’t exactly a detailed plan. She hadn’t decided exactly on what type of retribution she’d be giving- probably death- nor did she even know where to start.

Foolish and Eret’s arrival had only shaken her plan up more. That’s why she was beyond surprised that she stumbled across one of the Drowned crew almost immediately.

They’d docked at the nearest port because Puffy hadn’t packed enough supplies to support three people indefinitely (because it sounded like Foolish planned on staying indefinitely, and Puffy’s original agreement had been to let them stay until Eret was back on their feet-) and she needed food.

Foolish had been excited to leave the ship.

“What about Eret? Should we be leaving him behind?” Puffy had asked feeling a little guilty. They’d volunteered to stay behind since Foolish was practically vibrating with excitement at the idea of getting off the ship, and Puffy kinda had to get off the buy supplies. The port was pretty safe but Puffy hated leaving her ship entirely unattended.

“Nah, if anyone came down there, Eret could kick their ass,” Foolish assured Puffy with a grin. “Besides, they probably don’t really want to deal with the crowds. We’re good to head out.”

Puffy had doubted that Eret could truly handle *anyone*, but it was a safe enough port and Foolish looked so excited, and had been babbling about all the things he was going to but that she didn't have the heart to shut him down entirely, so she trusted him and docked her ship.

“Meet me back here by four,” Puffy had said, pressing a bag of money in Foolish’s hand. “Don’t start any fights you can’t win and try not to steal anything if you can help it.”

Foolish stared at the money for a moment, then looked up at her with a grin. “What are you, my father?” he teased.

Puffy rolled her eyes “Yes, I am. And I’m your captain. I don’t want to break you out of jail today.”

“I’ll do my best,” Foolish promised. Puffy didn’t even pretend that her smile was anything other than fond.

“Go. I’ll see you later,” she said, shooing him away from the ship.

Foolish, despite his rather unique characteristic, had disappeared easily into the throngs of people on the docks. Puffy secured her own money, mostly just gold nuggets and a handful of jewels in a bag she stored in her inventory and made sure her sword was strapped securely to her side.

She had then braved the sea of people herself, a list in mind.

But, after securing food and water to be sent back to her ship, Puffy had decided to go to the market stalls, just to see if she could pick up something for herself and the others, as a treat. She didn’t know much about Eret, but Foolish had said enough that Puffy had some idea of what they might like. Foolish was easy- he liked anything shiny and anything to do with the building.

She was hoping for a new belt herself- the one she was wearing had certainly seen better days and the leather was starting to fade from the amount of salt and sun it had seen. She browsed the stalls. There wasn’t much at this market- it was certainly one of the smaller ports, but there was less likely to be government interference or navy troubles. The navy, currently, was less focused on a single pirate, but it also made her much easier to get picked out as an outsider. They were still a few days out from the port she wanted to get to, but after tripling her crew, she had no choice but to do a supply run.

She hadn’t seen any law enforcement, so she wasn’t too worried. She found a simple black leather belt and a tiny rainbow earring for herself. She’d been planning on piercing her cartilage again and needed something to put in it. Maybe she’d make Foolish help her. Maybe not- he seemed like the type to be scared of needles. Eret probably wouldn’t be. She hesitated, before picking up a similar earring for them. She didn’t think their ear was pierced but maybe it could be a bonding experience?

She was browsing a table that was selling a wide variety of books about fascinating builds. She wasn't sure that he was really the reading type so she probably wouldn't get them, but maybe it would inspire her to find something else for him.

She moved onto the next table, which was selling a variety of leather pouches, and bumped into someone.

"Fuck" they cursed as they stumbled, and their bag fell to the ground, all their items everywhere. They dropped to their knees to begin picking things up "Shit."

"Sorry." She said immediately, dropping to her knees to help pick up the stuff "I didn't see you there! I didn't mean to-"

Puffy froze. They'd both reached for one a bottle of wine that had miraculously not broken in the fall and they'd flashed their wrist. And that's when she'd seen it. It was a small brand on their inner wrist, of small crossed bones with a trident above it.

Her head snapped up and she stared at them. She didn't recognize them, but she'd never forget that brand. It had been years since she'd seen it on a living person but she'd never forgotten it. It still haunted her dreams. It was hard to forget when the people who had it had ruined your life had it burnt on their wrist. When the people who murdered your friends, your child, had it.

"Drowned" she hissed and grabbed their wrist.

The Drowned Crew had named themselves after fucking zombies. They weren't a notorious crew, really. They hadn't had server-wide renown, but Puffy remembered. She may as well have had that damn mark on her own wrist, for how well she remembered it. She'd found who she was looking for. Their eyes widened in surprise like they hadn't expected to be spotted, even with that damn brand on their wrist. She pulled them to their feet, forcing them to drop their things. Puffy didn't give a shit about their things anymore, as she dragged them to their feet. "What the-"

"Shut up." Puffy hissed "Shut up and maybe I won't kill you right here."

Puffy wasn't going to kill him. Her hands were trembling too badly and she hoped they couldn't feel it against their wrist. She wasn't even sure she could draw her sword. She wasn't ready. It wasn't supposed to happen yet. This wasn't-

They snapped their jaw shut though, like a coward and allowed Puffy to drag them out of the market. It wasn't far to the edge and as soon as they were out of the bustling square Puffy pulled them into an alley, and slammed them up against a wall.

"What the fuck is going on?" they snapped, but Puffy could see the fear in their eyes. It only made her angrier. Her crew had been scared. Her *son* had been scared. "Who the hell are you?"

It shouldn't surprise her that they didn't remember. Of course, they didn't. Their crew had probably destroyed enough lives her face was nothing to remember.

“Where’s your ship?” She demanded, instead of answering.

“What?” they repeated, furrowing their brow “What are you-”

Puffy slammed their head against the wall again “Where is your ship? Where is your captain?”

They swallowed hard, obviously disoriented.”I-I don’t have a ship! Or a captain-”

“Don’t lie. I saw your brand.” Puffy said twisting their arm perhaps too harshly, exposing the mark “I know what crew you belong to.”

A look of horror flitted across their face. “No, no wait, listen I don’t know who you are but-”

“You killed my crew.” Puffy interrupted, unable to control her anger, and was horrified to hear the waver in her voice. She couldn’t cry. Not now. She *couldn’t*. “Ten years ago. The Drowned crew attacked my ship and- and killed all of them. You killed my son.”

Their face paled “Wait- no- lady-h that crew broke up!” they cried out, voice pitching up in fear “They broke up six months after I joined! I swear I have no idea what you’re talking about. I wasn’t even old enough to hold a sword ten years ago!”

That sounded like a lie, it sounded like someone trying to save their skin but-

They *were* young, though. That single thought cut through Puffy’s rage. They were *young*. No older than Foolish, for sure, perhaps younger, Certainly not old enough to have been on her ship that night.

Puffy swallowed hard, and stared at them for a moment, before dropping them. They weren’t prepared for it and collapsed to the ground, gasping for air. Puffy could see a red line across their neck where she’d dug her arm in. Now that the adrenaline was waning, a small tendril of guilt curled around her gut. Fuck.

Puffy sheathed her dagger and knelt down. “Are you alright?” she asked as gently as she could manage. Minx was right about her being too fucking soft for revenge, it seemed.

“Fine.” They rasped, eyeing her warily. “No thanks to you almost strangling me.”

Puffy frowned “Just because I let you down doesn’t mean you’re free to go. I could still kill you. I might still should”

She wasn’t going to, but it was still a threat she had to make. They swallowed “What do you want from me?”

“Information,” Puffy said. That hadn’t changed. She’d heard rumors that the crew had broken up, but nothing had ever been confirmed. She wasn’t entirely surprised, but that made her job that much harder. “When did the Drowned Crew break up?”

They frowned “About seven years ago? Yeah, I was branded about when I was about fourteen and didn’t even make it to my fifteenth birthday before the crew splintered entirely.”

“Why?” Puffy pressed. The desperation tasted bitter in her mouth. But it also tasted like hope, for the first time in a long time. Hope that she’d actually get to the bottom of this.

They shrugged, rubbing absently at their neck “I was a low-level grunt at best, so I’ve got no idea. But, apparently, the captain’s first mate had vanished a few years before and the captain never replaced him- he was a stubborn old bastard like that. The second mate was pissed that he never got promoted and the crew split. Not to mention there was a third faction that hated both of them, and either wanted to leave or some big changes to be made. I already regretted joining and while the other two groups went at it, a huge portion of the crew just.... Left.”

Puffy let out a long breath. “Do you know... is the captain alive? Or the first or second mates?”

“No clue.” They said “I... that crew was brutal. I was only there for about six months but I got my fair share of scars from them. It isn’t exactly a time in my life I like remembering.”

Puffy swallowed back the guilt burning the back of her throat “I’m sure it isn’t. I have one last question for you, then you’re free to go. Do you know anyone who might have any more information?”

They hesitated “Do you... you won’t hurt her will you?”

“As long as she tells me the truth, I won’t,” Puffy promised. She didn’t entirely mean it, but she didn’t want to kill whoever it was if they were innocent. If they didn’t try to protect the bastards.

“Alright,” They said, “Alright, if... last I knew, one of the older grunts was living on an island about three days south from here. We weren’t exactly close, but she helped me escape the ship the night I left,”

“And what makes you think that she knows more than you?” Puffy asked, crossing her arms.

They made a face “The captain had a *special* liking for her. She probably hear more shit than I did, but I never cared to ask,”

Puffy’s stomach twisted at that implication but brushed past it. “Thank you,”

They scoffed “Yeah, well, I didn’t exactly get much of a choice, did I?”

Puffy winced. “I’m not going to apologize, because for all I knew you were the one who slit the throat of my first mate,”

They paled and Puffy felt a little bad, but continued, as she stowed her weapon, and pulled a paper and quill from her inventory “But, I believe that you had nothing to do with that. So, if you ever need a place to go, or a job, I know a crew. Find the Fool’s Gold. Show any of them this paper, ask to speak to the captain, and they’ll take care of you,”

Puffy quickly scrawled a message for Minx on a page, signing it messily, before ripping it out. She folded the paper and held it out. They hesitated, then took it without reading it. “I won’t use it,” They said as if testing her.

Puffy shrugged “Don’t have to. It’s just all I can offer in thanks for the information,”

They watched her warily as they edged out of the alley as if they expected her to attack again. Puffy felt the shame creeping up the back of her neck, but she couldn’t blame them. She’d reacted pretty fucking poorly. Just before they stepped back out into the crowd, they hesitated. “I’m sorry about your crew. And your kid. If the captain’s still alive I hope you gut the bastard,”

Before Puffy could respond, they vanished into the crowds. She didn’t get up from the alley until they were long gone.

—

When she finally braved the markets again, it had been far longer than she’d intended to spend in the markets.. She aimlessly wandered back through the stalls. Puffy absently grabbed one of the building books for Foolish, and hardly looked at the title as she stashed it in her bag, dropping a few nuggets of gold on the table.

Puffy wasn’t sure he liked it, but she couldn’t go back empty-handed.

It was- it was probably ridiculous that that’s what she was focused on but it wouldn’t be fair, would it?

She made her way back to the ship, and though it was just after lunch she kind of just wanted to go to bed. But also scream. She wasn’t going to do any of those, though. sHe was going to keep going. It looked like all of her supplies had been delivered, if the crates on deck were anything to go by.

Puffy boarded the ship taking inventory. That was definitely everything she ordered. And... more? There were definitely two crates that weren’t food or water.

“You’re back, Captain,” Eret said, emerging from under the deck. They offered her a polite smile. Eret had been nothing but polite since they’d woken up, and appreciative, but that’s all they’d been. Unlike Foolish, they held Puffy at an arm’s length. Puffy could respect that, considering they didn’t know each other all that well. “I thought it might be longer. Where’s Foolish?”

“He said he had his own errands to run,” Puffy said, then motioned to the boxes “I guess he did, since I certainly didn’t order those two crates,”

Eret smiled, warmer this time “I hope you didn’t expect any of the money he gave you back. He’s a bit on an impulsive spender,”

Puffy really, really didn’t give a shit about the money. sHe had more than enough. She hadn’t been lying about that. But she didn’t want to be rude, so she gave Eret her best smile “It’s fine. I didn’t give him too much,”

“Good, I learned that lesson the hard way,” Eret said, with a rumbling laugh

Puffy tried to laugh too, but it sounded strained to her own ears.

Eret's smile faded. "Are you alright?"

Puffy was going to say yes- really!

"Not particularly," She said instead, surprising even herself "I- I don't know what Foolish told you about why I'm here-"

"Not much," Eret offered

"Well, long, long story short. I'm on a revenge mission. MY old crew was murdered years ago. I am after the people that did it. I didn't exactly think I'd run into someone at this market," Puffy said "I reacted... not well, to be honest. I nearly killed someone innocent over it. I've had this idea, of searching for these people for so long, it's hard to believe that I'm actually doing it,"

Eret remained entirely still. It was hard to read their expression behind their sunglasses. Puffy grimaced "Sorry," SHe said "I didn't mean to unload all of that on you so suddenly. That wasn't fair of me,"

"I just wasn't expecting it," Eret said "You're fine, Puffy. That's certainly a good reason to not quite be alright."

"Yeah, well, I have to be alright," Puffy said firmly "I've had my breakdowns. I'm moving on. This is how I'm moving on."

If she cried herself to sleep later that would be her business and her business only.

"I can't say that I quite understand," Eret said "But revenge is certainly one path to working things out,"

"But not the right one," Puffy grumbled "trust me, I've heard that before,"

Eret frowned "That wasn't at all what I was going to say, actually. If you think this is what you need, then I certainly won't stop you,"

Puffy paused and studied Eret for a moment. "I can see why Foolish likes you. Why you put up with him, I've got no clue though,"

Eret looked startled by that declaration and Puffy laughed since it was the first time she'd managed to get Eret to look genuinely startled. "I'm kidding, of course," Puffy assured him "Foolish is a good guy,"

Eret's face softened "Yes, he is. He's probably my oldest- and if I'm honest, only- friend. He's always been a bit more outgoing than I have,"

Oh. Oh. That was... that was pretty fucking sad, honestly, but she could believe it. Foolish seemed to naturally draw people in. it wasn't unfriendly, but she could see that between the two Foolish would certainly be the more outgoing one.

“Anyway,” Eret continued, not giving Puffy a chance to respond “I don’t really care what your motives are. Foolish likes you, and for me, that’s enough. We’ll help you however we can”

Puffy blinked in surprise “Thank you? I think? I mean... you two really don’t have to stay. Foolish said that you have your own motives for being out here,”

Eret nodded “I do. I have things that I’d like to do, but Foolish is very much attached and I’m not going to make him leave. We have plenty of time. Besides, I think your revenge for- who was it? Your son? It’s probably more important”

Eret smiled at the last bit like it was some sort of joke Puffy didn’t get. Honestly, it probably was some sort of inside joke between Foolish and Eret, considering how long they’d been friends. “You’re a good person too, Eret,”

“I don’t know about that Captian,” Eret said dismissively “But thank you. Now, do you want some help unloading all these boxes?”

Puffy glanced around “I would absolutely love some help,”

Though that had been her first real conversation with Eret, it seemed like something in the air had cleared. Maybe Erethad decided that they really did like Puffy, or had just gotten over some shyness, but Puffy managed to coax them into a casual conversation with they worked, unloaded potatoes in the kitchen.

Unlike Foolish who was always energetic and talking quickly, Eret tended to be more reserved. But their humor was a bit dry, and their laughter was just as infectious. She’d manage to coax him into telling a somewhat embarrassing story about Foolish that left her near tears.

Foolish acted offended when he came back, putting on a huge bit about how much it offended him, but by the time everything was unloaded and Foolish’s crates of random assorted items, the confrontation from earlier felt lighter than it had, leaving the anger in her chest... not gone, but muted, certainly.

In the morning they’d set sail for this island, and the first real lead she’d had in a very, very long time.

Puffy had come across many, many storms in her day, but this one was one of the worst. She clung to the wheel of the ship with an iron grip, feet planted firm as rain pounded down so hard it felt like pebbles against her face. She was trying to shout orders at Foolish, but she had no idea if he could even hear her over the howling winds. She could just see him through the driving rain, illuminated by every flash of lightning, as he fought with the sails to try and get them down before the wind tore them off entirely.

She wrenched the wheel hard, cutting against a looming wave, only just managing to keep it steady. She prayed that Eret wasn't getting too banged up below deck since they'd been down there strapping down supplies.

"Foolish," She shouted over the wind, turning over her shoulder to look at him "Foolish, how's it holding?"

Foolish, apparently could hear her because he looked up, as the deck was illuminated by a flash of lightning. That's when she saw it.

Foolish hadn't tied the ropes right and one of the boons was swinging wildly in the wind, and it was headed right for him. He couldn't see it, turned to face her, and certainly couldn't hear it over the crashing thunder. She didn't even have time to shout a warning before it hit him squarely on the back, sending him tumbling down over the railing into the roughly churning waters.

Her chest seized with panic as he slipped over the side.

"Foolish," Puffy screamed. He'd drown, likely stunned from the pain, and caught in the thrashing waters, or be electrocuted when the lightning hit the waves.

She released the wheel as she sprinted across the deck, ripping off her coat without a second thought to the storm or to who would control the ship.

She didn't hesitate as she hauled herself over the railing, diving straight down into the waters, so cold that it took every ounce of self-control not to gasp as she entered the water. The sea churned around her desperately, and the saltwater and currents blinded her. She couldn't see Foolish anywhere, even as she attempted to swim down. A sudden rush of current spun her around as her lungs burned from taxation, from cold, panic, and exertion. She couldn't find Foolish and she couldn't escape. They'd both die.

Puffy had doomed them both.

She couldn't see the surface anymore and her heart pounded in her throat. Her lungs screamed for her to breathe and against her mind her body acted, filling her lungs with the burn of saltwater.

The panic she felt was near as suffocating as the water helpless as she was pulled down, down, down, further into the frigid waters, darkness eating at the corner of her visions, as her body screamed for air it couldn't get, choking on the saltwater around her.

She made another desperate bid for what might have been the surface (or perhaps just further into the ocean), but it was all too much. Her body betrayed her.

There were brief glimpses of water, lighting air, gold, and-

Nothing.

—

Puffy woke up gagging on seawater. She instinctively rolled over, despite the ache through her entire body.

“There we go,” someone said distantly, as she coughed up what felt like gallons of saltwater from her aching lungs, “That’s it, cough up all the water,”

Finally, after what felt like ages, she collapsed back onto what she finally recognized as the deck of her ship, breathing heavily. To her left, just under the tips of her fingers was her coat, and the cool wood was pressed into her back, as she shivered violently. “Hey, glad to see you back in the land of the living, Captain,”

It was Foolish, hovering over her with a grin. *What* ? “Foolish,” She croaked, voice raw, as she drank in his appearance. He was damp, but his face was warm with relief, and he didn’t appear to be shivering. “What... what happened? How did you get out of the water? The storm?”

“The storm?” Foolish asked, his brows knitting together in concern “Puffy, what storm are you talking about? Sky’s clear,”

Puffy opened her mouth to protest but-

The sky was clear. Just beyond Foolish, the sky was a brilliant blue- no storm in sight. The boat was bobbing gently beneath them, not being tossed around, and the late evening sun was glittering near the horizon. Everything was... fine. It was calm.

“I don’t...” She started, rubbing her head. It was still clouded and confused, likely due to how long she’d been under. “Did we both respawn?” Guilt curled at the idea of Foolish having lost life, especially if she’d failed to save him.

“Respawn?” Foolish exclaimed “No! Neither of us respawned. I... I might’ve accidentally tied a boon wrong, and you tried to fix it, but it swung out and hit you overboard. I jumped in after you, and hauled us both backup, easy as that. You were just a little disoriented in the water and took a few big breaths of it, like you were a fish, which you aren’t, obviously”

Puffy frowned. Nothing quite made sense “No, Foolish, I know there was a storm, I don’t- I don’t understand,”

Foolish frowned “Okayyy, that’s it, we’re going below deck and getting you a healing potion asap. You must’ve hit pretty hard in the water if you’re remembering a storm that didn’t happen”

Puffy started to shake her head but winced when it felt like her brain was being rattled around inside her skull. “But I remember...”

“You almost drowned Puffy,” Foolish said, sounding a little guilty “You hit your head really hard. You need a healing potion and some sleep. I’ll make sure our boat doesn’t sink in the meantime. Eret’s below deck, doing... I’m not sure what. but we’re all fine. And *you* need rest”

Puffy allowed Foolish to pull her up, and she was forced to lean heavily on him, as her legs shook from the exertion. She knew it had stormed, she *knew* it, but...

Why would Foolish lie? *How* would he, even? It was perfectly clear outside and it wasn't like a storm could just vanish. She allowed him to help her down to her quarters and pressed a healing potion into her hand. "I'll be back in a little bit to bring you some bread or something. I dunno, whatever you want," Foolish rambled "I'm just glad you're okay, I was so worried when you didn't come back up. I'm just glad that I was able to pull you out,"

"I'll be fine, Foolish," Puffy said, waving him off, even as her body protested the movement. It was too much effort, but she didn't want to worry him. She still couldn't quite believe that he was alright, the image of him tumbling overboard was so clear in her mind.

Foolish wrung his hands, a touch anxiously "If you say so, I'll send Eret down in just a minute, okay?" Foolish paused in the door, casting a glance over his shoulder "I'm-I'm sorry,"

With that, he left. Puffy stared after him, frowning. What was he apologizing for?

Her head hurt too much to seriously consider much of anything, and her lungs still ached from the coarse salt. She had no energy to argue with him or to even think about it too much. She managed to strip off her undershirt and toe-off her boots before uncorking the healing potion with trembling hands, She downed half the potion, before discarding it onto her bedside and collapsing back onto her bed.

She was hovering near the edge of sleep, overtaken by her physical exhaustion and the warm hum of the magic settling in her veins. It did occur to her, however, that despite the fact Foolish said she'd been the one hit by a boon, her torso hadn't been bruised, like she'd been hit by a wooden beam.

She didn't have time to ponder the exact ramifications of that before sleep claimed her.

Chapter End Notes

- 1) I love writing this fic. It's so fun. It's very light hearted and the character dynamics are so fun.
- 2) Next chapter last chapter how?? It'll be a long one, just a warning. That doesn't mean that Puffy's story ends in this verse, don't you worry.
- 3) Have a good day everyone! love you guys. be kind, drink water, look at a picture of your favorite baby animal, listen to a song that makes you happy!

End Notes

I hope you enjoyed! Also, check out my tumblr for more content, including a Puffy playlist!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!